

E  
207  
F4  
A3

# MAJOR WILLIAM FERGUSON

UC-NRLF



B 4 349 440

LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

GIFT OF

*C. B. Alexander*

*Class*







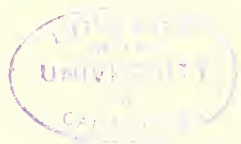


MAJOR WILLIAM FERGUSON  
MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN PHILO-  
SOPHICAL SOCIETY, OFFICER IN THE  
ARMY OF THE REVOLUTION AND IN  
THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

BY

CHARLES BEATTY ALEXANDER, LL.D.

OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI



NEW YORK

MCMVIII

E 207  
.F4A3

*The edition of this volume, limited to two hundred copies, all being numbered and signed by the author, was printed on Italian hand-made paper, at The Trow Press, in the month of February, 1908.*

*This is No. 172*

*E. B. Alexander*





## PREFATORY NOTE

THE following brief memoir of Major William Ferguson has been compiled from various sources. Extracts from some of these, including certain letters and other memoranda, will be found in the appendix. A considerable part of the narrative, which deals mainly with Major Ferguson's military career during the War of the Revolution, and during a subsequent campaign against the Indians, is taken from an article by the Rev. Samuel D. Alexander, D.D., which was published in the "American Historical Record" (Vol. II.), from the Diary of Major Ebenezer Denny; and from Howe's "Historical Collections of Ohio." The sketch is intended primarily for the descendants of Major Ferguson, but the writer hopes that it may be of some interest to his brethren in the Society of the Cincinnati, some of whose ancestors are mentioned in its pages.



## MEMOIR

William Ferguson was born in Armagh, Ireland, of Scotch-Irish parents. The exact date of his birth is unknown; but toward the close of the year 1774, being about twenty-one years of age, he came to America with his parents, Usher and Mary Ferguson, and settled in Philadelphia. The country was at that time in a state of great unrest, which soon developed into active warfare. Pennsylvania was among the first of the colonies to take arms, and Ferguson, always a man of honor and keen sensibilities, was not slow to discover on which side he stood. On October 30, 1775, he enlisted as bombardier in Captain Proctor's Company of Pennsylvania Artillery. Proctor, himself an Irishman, was the son of Francis Proctor, who emigrated before the Revolution, and took up his residence in Philadelphia. He raised the only regular organization of Pennsylvania artillery, which was celebrated by the famous Major

André in a poem composed shortly before his death :

“And Major Lee took horses rare  
And Proctor with his cannon.”

It may be added that Captain Proctor was well known as a free mason, and afterwards organized a lodge in his regiment, on May 18, 1779, although no record of membership is in possession of the Masonic Order. This artillery regiment fought in the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine and Germantown. In 1779 it formed part of the force of Sullivan in his expedition against the Six Nations.

On October 27, 1775,<sup>1</sup> Proctor had applied to the Council of Safety for appointment as captain of an artillery company which the provincial authorities had already determined to raise and employ at Fort Island, in the Delaware, for the defense of the Province. In this application he was successful, receiving on the same day a commission as Captain of Artillery, with authority to recruit a company. Two months later, he was stationed

<sup>1</sup> This account of the formation and career of the First Pennsylvania Artillery, is taken in part from *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, p. 454 *et seq.*

at Fort Island, in command of about ninety men, charged with the active defense of the river. On May 6, 1776, he received orders from the Committee of Safety, "to call every boat and soldier to their stations, and each to prepare for immediate action and to suffer no officer or man to leave their stations without the license of this board or the commanding officer." The British men of war *Roe-buck* and *Liverpool* lay in the Delaware just below Philadelphia, and on May 8, 1776, an engagement took place between these ships and the naval forces of Pennsylvania. In coöperation with the latter, serving on the *Hornet* were Captain Proctor and one hundred of his men who volunteered for the fight.<sup>1</sup> This was probably the first active service in which Ferguson took part. Proctor's command remained at Fort Island through the next spring and summer, performing, however, under order of the provincial and state authorities, various services in Philadelphia and at other neighboring points.

On July 31, 1776, Proctor's Company consisted of one hundred and fourteen men all told, together with twelve musicians. The

<sup>1</sup> Scharf & Westcott's "History of Philadelphia," p. 306.

following is a muster roll of its officers on that date:

*Captain.*

Thomas Proctor.

*Captain Lieutenant.*

Jeremiah Simmons.

*First Lieutenant.*

Hercules Courtenay.

*Second Lieutenant.*

John Martin Strobogh.

*Lieut. Fire Worker.*

Francis Proctor.

*Quarter Master Sergeant.*

John Webster.

*Corporal and Clerk to Company.*

Patrick Duffy.

*Sergeants.*

Charles Turnbull,

Jacob Parker,

John Stephenson.

*Corporals.*

William Ferguson,

Thomas Healy,

George May.

(Penna. in Rev., Vol. II, p. 175.)

As may be seen, Ferguson's name here appears in the list of corporals.

The services of the company were so well

appreciated that on August 14, 1776, it was determined to increase the number of men employed to two hundred, and to divide the body into two companies. John Martin Strobogh was appointed captain of one, and Thomas Forrest of the other. Proctor assumed the general command with the title of Major.

On October 5, 1776, Ferguson was commissioned, by the Committee of Safety, Third Lieutenant of the First Company, under the general command of Major Proctor. On the same day the following resolution was adopted by the Committee :

*"Resolved,* That a detachment be made from the artillery companies of the State, of fifty men, to be sent to Fort Montgomery, under the command of Captain Strobogh, subject to the direction of the Commander in chief, and that two of the commissioned officers in his company, and Lieutenant Proctor,<sup>1</sup> of Captain Forrest's Company, proceed with the said detachment (that they may have an opportunity of seeing service) to be relieved at such time as the Board may think proper, and that they shall march as soon as they are furnished with necessary camp

<sup>1</sup> Second Lieutenant Francis Proctor.

equipage. Major Proctor is to see this resolve carried into execution.”<sup>1</sup>

On December 1, 1776, Major Proctor proceeded to execute this resolution, and for the purpose detailed Captain Thomas Forrest, with fifty officers and privates, and two six-pounder brass field pieces. They proceeded from Philadelphia to Trenton, and there placed themselves at the disposal of General Washington. They were actively engaged in the events which subsequently occurred. There is no accurate list of those who accompanied Captain Forrest at this time. There were with him, however, only two lieutenants in Captain Strobogh's Company, and Ferguson may have been one of them.

General Knox was so impressed with the efficiency of Proctor's Artillery that, in the early part of 1777, he sought to annex this force to the Continental Artillery already under his command. Proctor is said to have objected to such an arrangement, being unwilling, without an absolute order of State or Congress, to abandon his position as provincial commander and to accept a position subordinate to Knox. But, on February 6, 1777, the Council of Safety vetoed the pro-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.



posed annexation of Proctor's Company to the Continental Army, and ordered that a complete regiment of State artillery be raised, which Proctor was to command with the rank of colonel. Of the part played by Ferguson in the early history of Proctor's Company we have meager information; but there are some details of an engagement in which he was taken prisoner by the British under Lord Cornwallis:

"Shortly after its being thus organized, Proctor's regiment was deprived of the services of two of its bravest officers and a score or more of its men, who were surprised by the enemy and captured. The circumstances of this little affair were as follows: General Lincoln, with about five hundred men, consisting among others of a portion of the Second Pennsylvania Regiment, some militia, and part of Proctor's Artillery, was stationed at Bound Brook, New Jersey, charged with the protection of territory some five or six miles in extent. To perform this service Lincoln was compelled to dispose of his troops so as to leave his flanks exposed. Lord Cornwallis, who lay at Brunswick, conceived the plan of attacking Lincoln and Chase the morning of the 13th of April, 1777, for the

execution of his design. The plan was exceedingly well laid and nearly as well executed. Through the neglect of the American patrols the enemy were allowed to cross the Raritan River, just above Lincoln's quarters, and to advance to within two hundred yards of him, before they were discovered. Lord Cornwallis and General Grant were with the attacking party, and General Lincoln and his command were compelled to make good their escape. The enemy remained about an hour and a half, destroying some stores before recrossing the river to Brunswick; General Lincoln, being reënforced, took possession of the post again in the evening.

"The British loss upon this occasion was reported by Lord Howe to be three killed and four wounded. In regard to the American loss, General Washington, on April 14th, reports to the Board of War, as follows: 'Our chief and only loss was two pieces of artillery, and with them Lieutenants Ferguson and Turnbull, with about twenty men of Colonel Proctor's regiment. A party of horse was pushed so suddenly upon them that they could not possibly get off.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 4, Phila., 1880. Article by Benjamin M. Nead, Esq.

From April 13, 1777, until December 1, 1780, Lieutenant Ferguson was a prisoner of war, being confined during a part of this time at Flatbush, Long Island, where he devoted much time to study, particularly of ordnance and of the art of war. His intense interest in his profession and his enthusiastic devotion to perfecting himself in everything pertaining to it, were always noticeable and won for him the deep regard of all with whom he came in contact—whether soldiers or civilians. During the period of his imprisonment he was promoted to the rank of captain. This was on August 18, 1778; and by an act of Congress, on September 3d, of the same year, his regiment was formally admitted to the Continental Army. We know but little of his life at Flatbush. The voluminous records concerning those confined there, now in the Library of the New York Historical Society, make no mention of him, nor does his name appear in the lists of those who took part in the theatricals organized by the prisoners for their amusement, nor is he mentioned in the many letters from Flatbush which have been printed. Edward Authill, however, author of a manuscript treatise on Geography and Astronomy, was one of his

fellow prisoners. He dedicated the work to "William Ferguson, Esq., Captain in Colonel Proctor's Regiment of Artillery, in the Army of the United States," adding, "I have singled you out from a number of my unfortunate brethren in consequence of my observation of your studious turn and laudable thirst for mathematical knowledge."

In the monthly return of officers of the Pennsylvania State Regiment of Artillery, on March 29, 1780, Captain Ferguson is mentioned as being "exchanged and in camp." His actual exchange, however, by Abraham Skinner, Commissary General of Prisoners, probably did not take place until December 1, 1780.

After his release Ferguson seems to have been transferred in company with some others to General Greene's command in the South, although there is little or no record of his position between 1780 and 1785. It is known, however, that after the surrender of Cornwallis, three companies of the Continental Artillery were transferred to the Southern Army, under General Greene; and in his "Archives"<sup>1</sup> Dr. Egle refers to the "Hand

<sup>1</sup> The writer has searched in vain for the original of this return. But the "Hand Papers" have been scattered, since

Papers," as containing a return dated James Island, S. C., January 31, 1783, which gives the strength of this detachment as follows: Capt. Ferguson's Company, 21; Capt. Bruce's Company, 14; Capt. McClures' Company, 25.

The following letter was written by Ferguson while in camp at Camden, South Carolina:

CAMDEN, April 26, 1781.

*Dear Doctor:*

I have just received your kind favor of the 4th ultimo, and have at the same time a direct opportunity of writing by Captain Campbell, who is returning to Carlisle, to whom I must beg leave to refer you, particularly for the news, as he is just from camp. I understand from him there is like to have been shooting work at camp lately. Sergeant Gosmer has been shot a few days ago for being concerned with several others in a conspiracy against General Greene. They agreed to deliver the General into the hands of the enemy, who had sent out one hundred and

their sale at auction some years ago to many different purchasers. In Col. Rec., Vol. XII, p. 718, the following appears, under date of May 4, 1781: "At a meeting of the Council, there was voted in favor of Capt. Wm. Ferguson on his order the sum of one hundred pounds State money to be charged to his account and deducted as aforesaid."

fifty horses for that purpose, and had got into the rear of the army, about two miles from the General's quarters, but was happily prevented from effecting their scheme. The British horse on their return fell in with between twenty and thirty of Lee's horse, of whom it is said they took ten horses and nine men. General Wayne has had a brush with the enemy in Georgia, in which he was successful, but can't give the particulars. The enemy desert very fast. Our army is in a most dreadful situation for want of cloathing, being almost destitute of everything to render the fatigues of war supportable, and provisions are very often scarce and very bad. These and the want of pay are the reasons of their discontent. The army lies at Bacon's Bridge, about twenty miles from Charles Town. How long they will be able to keep that position, can't tell. The times of the Southern troops are dayly expiring, and consequently the army is lessening in number.

McClure, Douty, Parker and myself are stationed at this place and believe we shall remain here all summer. It is a very poor place at present, being stripped of everything when the British were in possession of it, but hope provisions will be plenty when the new

crops are got in. We have been very busy in making a gardain, and if you pay us a visit hope we shall be able to treat you with some of the fruits of our labour. If you come this way I would beg leave to recommend the supplying yourself with a good store of coffee and sugar, as these articles are very scarce and dear. The very worst sugar half a dollar a pound, and coffee one dollar, but dearness and scarcity don't affect us as we have no money to purchase were it ever so cheap and plenty. I will not particularize any of my friends and acquaintances, but leave the presenting them with my best wishes to your own discretion. The gentlemen here are all well and desire their compliments to you and all brother officers.

I am, dear Reading, yours, etc.,

To

W. FERGUSON.

DOCTOR BEATTY.

Please present my compliments to Captain Smith's family in Carlisle. When you write let us know the strength of the regiment with you.

MOSES COHEN,

Intelligence Office,

East side of Front Street,

20 doors above Market Street



The war came to a close with the evacuation of the City of New York by the British, on November 25, 1783, and on December 23d Washington resigned his commission and the troops were disbanded. A short time before, a number of officers, then at Newburgh, formed the Society of the Cincinnati, of which Ferguson was an original member. He was one of a number who gave one month's pay to the funds of the Society.<sup>1</sup>

The following is one of the few letters of Major Ferguson which remain. It is given here on this account, not because it has any intrinsic importance :

PHILADELPHIA, January 15, 1783.

*Dear Doctor :*

Yours of the 11th instant I received this morning. I am happy to understand the papers afforded you some amusement and herewith send you some more. In them you will see how the Censors have handled the late Election. This day they have begun to erect the Triumphal Arch, and it's said the display of fireworks is to be on the evening

<sup>1</sup> The writer, who is a member of the State Society of the Cincinnati, of Pennsylvania, in succession to his great grandfather, Major Ferguson, has in his possession the original certificate of membership, signed by General Washington, and attested by General Knox.



of the 20th inst., if the weather be fair, if not, on the first that will answer. I hope you will come to see them, as it is said they will exceed anything of the kind that has been exhibited here these several years. Doctor Martin was buried to-day; he was obliged to be bound to his bed for some time before his death, being lunatic, which they say was occasioned by a fall on the ice. Crosley was in town this evening; he begs to be remembered to you. People are all well in Darby. I see Ashton, Sunday eight days, who told me the Accounts were almost finished. Proctor is able to drink his beer again. Please to present my compliments to our friend Craig, and believe me to be sincerely yours,

W. FERGUSON.

DOCTOR BEATTY.

For some months prior to the summer of 1784, there existed no Federal forces of any kind. But soon the necessity of some means for internal protection became clear; and by the end of 1784 several of the States had organized a militia for home defense, and especially for defense against the Indians, who were becoming actively hostile along the frontier. Pennsylvania was among the States which had made this preparation. In June of

that year a resolution was passed by Congress calling upon the States to organize a militia, and in April, 1785, a measure was enacted providing for a Federal militia and again asking troops of the States. The regiment organized by Pennsylvania was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Josiah Harmar, then stationed at Fort McIntosh (now Beaver, Pa.).<sup>1</sup>

On October 20, 1785, the Supreme Executive Council<sup>2</sup> appointed Ferguson to be Captain of Artillery, for service in the regiment commanded by Colonel Harmar, and this was reported by the Secretary of the Council to the United States Secretary of War. Two years later we find further information regarding Colonel Harmar's Regiment, and a muster roll, in the following letter:

LT. COL. JOSIAH HARMAR TO  
PRES. FRANKLIN, 1787.

FORT HARMAR, AT THE MOUTH OF THE  
MUSKINGUM, December 23, 1787.  
*Sir:*

I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency & the Honorable, the Council, a

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup> Colonial Records. Minutes of Sup. Ex. Council of Pa., p. 569. See Appendix C.

return of the Pennsylvania Troops in the Service of the United States, dated this day.

The Secretary at War informs me that Congress by their Act of the 3d of October last, have been pleased to call upon the same States to raise the same number of men for three years, in order that the present officers might be retained in service.

By Mr. Melchior your Excellency's Letter was received, likewise one from the honorable, the Vice-President, General Mifflin, & the honorable Charles Biddle, Esq., the Secretary; all in favor of this young Gentleman for the appointment of an Ensigncy. Previous to the receipt of these letters I was induced, in my letter of the 7th August, to recommend to your Excellency, Mr. Robert Thompson, a son of the late General Thompson's, to fill the first vacancy. He was warmly recommended to me by General Irvin & several others of his acquaintance.

From the powerful recommendations in favor of Mr. Melchior it would be presumption in me to urge the matter further, as the matter rests solely with your honorable body.

If it meets the approbation of your Excellency & the Honorable Council, the following is the arrangement which I wish to take place

in our State, for the First United States Regiment, viz:

Josiah Harmar, { Lt. Col. Com't.  
Brigadier General by Brevet.

Captain William Ferguson, Artillery.

Captain David Ziegler, Infantry.

Captain William M'Curdy, ditto.

Captain Joseph Ashton, { Infantry, Vice Cap-  
tain. Finney, re-  
signed 1st Sep-  
tember.

Lieutenant Ercurius Beatty, Infantry.

Lieutenant Thomas Doyle, ditto.

Lieutenant John Armstrong, ditto.

Lieutenant Edward Spear, Art'y, Vice Lt.

Ashton, promoted

Ensign Ebenezer Denny, Infantry.

Ensign Nathan M'Dowell, ditto.

Robert Thompson, { One of them to be En-  
sign in the Infantry,  
Jacob Melchior, { Vice Ensign Spear,  
promoted.

John M'Dowell, Surgeon. { It is uncertain  
whether he will  
continue in the  
Service or not.

Richard Allison, Surgeon's Mate.

Either Mr. Thompson or Mr. Melchior, whichever your Excellency & the Honorable Council shall judge most proper, will fill the vacancy occasioned by Captain Finney's resignation. If Doctor M'Dowell declines the service, Doctor Allison, the mate, is, I believe, in every respect qualified to succeed him.

I have the honor to be,

With the highest esteem & respect,

Your Excellency's & the honorable  
Council's most h'ble & obt. Serv't,

JOS. HARMAR,

Lt. Col. Com. 1st U. S. Reg., & Brig. Gen.  
by Brevet.

Directed,

His Excellency, Benjamin Franklin, Esq.,  
President, & the honorable, The Supreme  
Executive Council, Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup>

This was the origin of the First United States Regiment. Ferguson's energy and devotion in its service were conspicuous. He was active in fortifying his post, and in drilling his command. A trace of his zeal as a recruiting officer appears in the following undated letter :

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Archives*, Old Series, Vol. XI, p. 217.

To His Excellency Thomas Mifflin, Esq.,  
and the Honourable the Supreme Executive  
Council:

*Gentlemen:*

I have now recruited upwards of fifty soldiers as part of the Pennsylvania Quota of troops, and now request that an order may be drawn in my favour for fifty dollars, on the treasury, on the same principle that Capt. Ziegler rec'd a dollar per man for his Recruits last year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

W. FERGUSON.

In a dispatch to General Knox from Fort Washington, General Harmar says: "I am particularly indebted to Captain Ferguson and Lieutenant Pratt for their indefatigable industry and attention in forwarding the work thus far." This work was the construction of Fort Washington, on what is now the site of Cincinnati.<sup>1</sup>

About this time a dispute arose between Captains Ferguson and Ziegler regarding rank. There are several references to this in contemporary documents.

"In June, 1784, when Congress called for

<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. XI, p. 590.

a regiment partly infantry and partly artillery, Pennsylvania immediately furnished her quota infantry and artillery. Lieut. Col. Josiah Har-mar commanding, Captain Douglass and Lieut. Jos. Ashton were appointed to the command of the Artillery Company. They both belonged to Proctor's regiment. The following year Captain Douglass was dropped and Ferguson took his place, apparently on a claim of rank." Major Ferguson's descendants claim that he was in the service continuously from 1775 until his death.<sup>1</sup>

It appears that General Knox, Secretary of War, wrote to the Supreme Executive Council<sup>2</sup> with respect to this matter, and that the Vice-President of the Council was instructed to order the Secretary of War to institute a court of inquiry and return a report. In reply, General Knox wrote as follows :

WAR OFFICE, February 16, 1788.

*Sir :*

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 2d instant, stating the dispute of rank between Captains Ziegler and Ferguson, and also covering the certifi-

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. IV, No. 4, p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the Sup. Ex. Council*, Vol. XV, p. 394.



cate of the promotions and appointment in the quota of Pennsylvania troops in the service of the United States, made by the Executive Council on the 26th of November, 1787—to wit: Lieutenant Ashton promoted to be a captain, vice Finney resigned—the senior Ensign promoted to be a Lieutenant, vice Ashton promoted, and Robert Thompson appointed to be an Ensign.

Your letter contained the first intimation of the dispute alluded to. Early after the formation of the present corps, I directed the commanding officer to assemble the other field officers, and the inspector, as a board to settle the relative rank of all the officers of the regiment. But the dispersed and distant situation of the several companies prevented a compliance with my orders.

On considering the subject of rank of the officers on the present military establishment, it appeared perfectly reasonable to me that all the commissions should be dated on the day of the resolve of Congress which gave existence to the corps. That unless this point were made a principle, officers might lose or gain what they regard as an essential right from the accidental circumstance of the legislature of the State to which they were at-



tached, meeting a little early or later as the case might be ; accordingly, the commissions were all dated on the 12th of April, 1785, and the settlement of their relative rank was left to the judgment of the field officers.

But as the resolves of October, 1786, augmented the troops, by which officers might be introduced on the same grades with those previously in service, it became necessary to hold up the principle that officers, in the service of the Union, should in cases of original appointments, take rank from the dates of the acts of Congress, by which they were raised, notwithstanding any difference of relative rank during the late war.

In holding up this idea as a principle, I did not think it ought to operate prior to April, 1785. The corps raised for one year by the resolve of Congress, of the 3d of June, 1784, I considered merely as militia, and I conceive this conclusion was fully authorized, as well by the letter as the spirit of the said resolve, and that such temporary service ought not in equity, nor could not with military propriety be estimated as a counterbalance for the established relative rank which might have subsisted for several years of the late war.

Notwithstanding my opinion on the subject of the troops raised by the resolve of June, 1784, the Executive Council possess the right on an original appointment to arrange their officers as they please, but perhaps they may on consideration be of opinion that it might conduce to the harmony of the service to leave the decision of the present dispute to a board of field officers. If so, and you should be pleased to intimate such disposition to me, I will direct the commanding officer accordingly. I do not conceive that the service can suffer any degree of injury by the time such reference would require, as the present stations of the two officers are greatly separated.

I should be much obliged by being informed, whether any measures have been taken by the Legislature of Pennsylvania in consequence of the requisitions of Congress, of the 3d of October last, for replacing the troops on the frontiers.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

With the highest respect and esteem,

your most obedt. & very humble Servant,

J. KNOX.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Archives*, Old Series, Vol. XI, p. 240.  
For further letters on this subject, see Appendix D.

However this matter of rank may have been settled, it does not seem that the discussion interfered with Ferguson in the performance of his duty. Nor did he resign as other officers did in certain cases of a similar kind. In December, 1788, he left Fort Harmar, where he was at that time stationed, carrying a letter from General Harmar to Governor Mifflin, at Philadelphia. In this letter Ferguson is highly commended as an officer. On April 20, 1789, he married Susanna, daughter of Markell and Mary Ewing. The wedding was at Philadelphia, and the bride is described as "both a belle and a beauty," and a pastel portrait, now in possession of the family, would seem to confirm the latter statement. Ferguson, however, did not remain long inactive. On September 29th his nomination was sent to the Senate as Captain of a battery of artillery in the first regular army organized under the United States Government. And toward the close of the year he began to be active in preparing for the Indian War, which was then impending. Toward the close of 1789 the attitude of the Indian tribes on the frontier had become decidedly hostile. General Harmar was put in command of all the United States

forces along the border; and among these was Ferguson's Company. He was stationed at Fort Washington, being second in command to General Harmar. Always an enthusiastic and energetic disciplinarian, he did all in his power to strengthen his post, and to perfect the equipment and efficiency of his men. But in so doing he encountered many difficulties; for the soldiers were ill-fed, poorly equipped, and quite unused to the hardships of frontier life. Ferguson complained repeatedly of the youth of the recruits who came to his command. He was, however, forced to train these raw young men for the defense of his post and to make them an effective element in Harmar's fighting force. Ferguson arrived at the front on August 11, 1789, joining the force of General Harmar, and, on September 4th, he "with his company was ordered to join Strong in erecting a fort near to Miami."<sup>1</sup> Active preparations for an advance against the Indians began on July 15, 1790. "The General commenced his preparations, calculations of provisions, horses, stores, etc., which were immediately made out and ordered accordingly. Every day employed in the most industrious man-

<sup>1</sup> Diary of Major Thomas Denny, of that date.

ner Captain Ferguson, with his Company, engaged in getting in complete order the artillery and military stores.”<sup>1</sup> These preparations were continued until September 30, 1790, when “the General, having got forward the supplies, moved on with the Federal Troops formed into 2 small Battalions under the immediate command of Majors Wyllys and Doughty, together with Capt. Ferguson’s Company of Artillery, who took along three light brass pieces.”<sup>1</sup> The militia had moved ahead on the 26th, under Lieut.-Col. Tribbley and Major Paul. After a fatiguing march the enemy was encountered at the junction of the St. Mary and St. Joseph rivers, where Fort Wayne, Indiana, now stands. Here a fierce battle took place, which resulted in what has been wrongly called “Harmar’s defeat.” For the object of the expedition was attained; many Indian towns and supplies were wholly destroyed. But the success of the engagement was impaired by the miserable condition of the militia and their unseemly jealousy of the regular troops. A Court of Inquiry was ordered subsequently, by which General Harmar was honorably acquitted. Ferguson was

<sup>1</sup> Diary of Major Thomas Denny, of that date.

one of the witnesses, and testified that the Kentucky militia "were almost destitute of camp kettles and axes; nor could a supply of these useful articles be procured. Their arms were generally very bad and unfit for service." "They came under my inspection," he continued, "in making repairs; as a specimen, one rifle was brought to be repaired without a lock, and another without a stock. . . . Among the militia were a great many hardly able to bear arms, such as old infirm men, and young boys. They were not such as might be expected from a frontier country—smart, active woodmen, well accustomed to arms, and alert to revenge the injury done them and their connections. Now there were a great many of the substitutes who had never fired a gun. Major Hall, of Pennsylvania, told me that many of his men were so awkward that they could not take their gun locks off to oil them and put them on again, nor could they put in their flints so as to be useful."<sup>1</sup>

At the point where Harmar was defeated, Ferguson was immediately employed by General St. Clair, in organizing a military post connected by intermediate stations with Fort

<sup>1</sup> Howe, "Historical Collections of Ohio," Vol. II, p. 435.

Washington. At the close of April, 1791, St. Clair was at Pittsburg, to which point troops and supplies were being forwarded. On May 15th he reached Fort Washington. According to Harmar, Ferguson did not accompany St. Clair on the march to Fort Washington, but awaited him there. In his own narrative, however, St. Clair says that on June 20, 1791, Ferguson came with a quantity of military stores. "It was then known that nearly the whole ammunition for the campaign was to be made up, and a laboratory had now to be prepared; and one convenient for making musket cartridges in was soon got in order, but there was no place to fill the shells in but one of the blockhouses, which was occupied as a storehouse, where also all the artillery cartridges had to be filled, as well as the shells for the howitzers: for loose cartridge could not be trusted in the barracks room, with fires on all sides of it, and it was much hampered and far from a safe situation. Any person acquainted with the fixing of ammunition knows that it is very tedious as well as very laborious business; and that in places where there is no want of room, or other conveniences, accidents very frequently happen, and the laboratory blows up. But it



was not ammunition for the campaign only that we wanted, but a stock likewise for the projected post at the Miami, which was to be garrisoned by twelve or fourteen hundred men for the winter at least; and for the intermediate posts. It was discovered also that the carriages of the guns that came from Philadelphia were unfit for service, and that those pieces must be new mounted. This occasioned more labour, and of course a greater number of workmen, for not only shops to work in was to be built, but tools to work with to be made. An armoury likewise was to be constructed for the repairing of the arms and it would have been altogether impossible to have got forward at all had there not been a considerable number of artificers among the troops which arrived with Major Gaither. Heavy draughts had of course to be made for them, which was submitted to with some reluctance, and that is not to be wondered at. The Officer dislikes to have his men taken away from him, and it is but too often the case; that dislike to labour is the principal inducement of men's listing as soldiers, which, when there is occasion to employ them as artificers, always occasions discontent. The arms of the detachment were in bad order



also, and had nearly all to be repaired, and so fast did the work of that kind increase upon our hands that at one time it appeared it would never be got through, nor, indeed, would it, *but for the indefatigable industry of Major Ferguson*, who undertook to superintend the artificers, as well as the Laboratory.”<sup>1</sup>

Further details of the imperfect condition of the supplies are given in a letter written from Fort Washington by Major Ferguson to General St. Clair, and dated June 25, 1791, in which it is said: “In the enclosed return of military stores, powder, lead, paper and thread are wanted to complete three thousand men with one hundred and thirty rounds each. Should more be required, these articles will have to be augmented. I beg leave to report that the casks in which the Powder was last sent were very light, and not properly secured; also the musket-cartridge paper was not of proper sort, being too easily torn, and of course the cartridges made of it will not bear much carriage.”<sup>2</sup> Another obstacle in preparing for the campaign was the incompetency and culpable neglect of duty shown

<sup>1</sup> Howe, “Historical Collections of Ohio,” Vol. II, p. 435.

<sup>2</sup> St. Clair Papers. Compiled by William Henry Smith. Vol. II.

by Quartermaster Hodgdon. Harmar testified in the Court of Inquiry that "Major Ferguson complained most bitterly" of him; and Major Zeigler in his testimony said that the pack-saddles were too large, and that Major Ferguson was extremely uneasy on this account, as indeed were all the officers who saw them. The lack of implements for building fortifications was severely felt: often there was only one axe to three men, and two looked on while the third used it. Colonel Winthrop Sargeant in his diary<sup>1</sup> also remarks: "Major Ferguson has very frequently represented to me that the military stores and arms were sent on in a most infamous manner." It would seem that the entire burden in this campaign was laid upon Ferguson—of rectifying the mistakes of others, and of bringing to some sort of efficiency men and tools quite unadapted to the severe service required of them. Colonel Sargeant adds: "Without him the expedition would probably have failed in ignominy, even before the Indians were reached."

After an arduous march through the wilderness, General St. Clair with his command arrived at the Wabash River on November 3,

<sup>1</sup> Printed privately by his grandson. Wormsloe, June 20, 1851.

1791. Major Ebenezer Denny in his diary gives some details of the expedition. The march began at nine o'clock in the morning. At about noon the small army passed over dry ground, descended gradually to a small creek "supposed to be a branch of the waters emptying into Lake Erie." Two miles further, they encamped "on dry, pleasant ground" on the bank of "a creek about twenty yards wide, said to be the Pickawayfork of the Omie." The distance marched was nine miles: and "fresh signs of savages" appeared in different places. Scouting parties were sent out, but did not find the enemy. Upon going into camp, the men were much fatigued, so that no measures for defense were ordered by the General. A plan of attack was arranged, however, by the latter in consultation with "Major Ferguson, commanding officer of artillery." The space on the dry ground was rather limited and the men in camp were crowded. Parallel with the front line ran the creek. "The militia advanced across the creek about three hundred yards." The rest of the army soon followed under Major Denny's direction and at dusk they went into camp. Contrary to the plan made by the commanding officers, the Indians with an overwhelming force took

the offensive. The following graphic account of the engagement is given by Major Denny :

“ November 4th . . . The frequent firing of the Sentinels through the night had disturbed the camp, and excited some concern among the officers. The guards had reported the Indians to be skulking about in considerable numbers. About ten o'clock at night General Butler who commanded the right wing was desired to send out an intelligent officer and party to make discoveries. Captain Slough with two Subalterns and thirty men I saw paraded at General Butler's tent for this purpose, and I heard the General give Captain Slough very particular verbal orders how to proceed. Myself and two or three officers staid with the General until late, when I returned to the Commander-in-chief whose tent was at some distance on the left, and who was unable to be up. The troops paraded this morning at the usual time, and had been dismissed from the line for a few minutes, when the woods in front rung with the yells and fire of the savages. The poor militia who were but three hundred yards in front, had scarcely time to return a shot—they fled into our camp. The troops were under arms in an instant, and a

smart fire from the front line met the enemy. It was but a few minutes, however, until the men were engaged in every quarter. The enemy from the front filed off to the left and right, and completely surrounded the camp, killed and cut off nearly all the guards, and approached close to the lines. They advanced from one tree, log or stump to another, under cover of the smoke of our fire. The artillery and musketry made a tremendous noise but did little execution.

“The Indians seemed to brave everything, and when fairly fixed around us, they made no noise other than their fire which they kept up very constant, and which seldom failed to tell, although scarcely heard. Our left flank, probably from the nature of the ground, gave way first, the enemy got possession of that part of the encampment, but it being pretty clear ground, they were too much exposed, and were soon repulsed. I was at this time with the General engaged towards the right; he was on foot, and led the party himself that drove the enemy out, and regained our ground on the left. The battalions in the rear charged several times, and forced the savages from their shelter, but they always turned with the Battalions and fired upon their back; indeed

they seemed not to fear anything we could do.<sup>1</sup> "When the Indians began a pursuit of the flying militia, Major Ferguson opened an artillery fire upon the former, which put them to great confusion, but they were soon rallied by a leader on horseback who wore a red coat and was undoubtedly a British officer."<sup>2</sup>

The fire seems to have been directed chiefly against the centre of the American troops, where the artillery was stationed. Attempts were made to drive back the Indians with the bayonet, but the latter "would skip out of reach of the Bayonet, and return as they pleased. They were visible only when raised by a charge."<sup>3</sup> The slaughter on both sides was great, for the ground was "literally covered with the dead." "At one time Colonel Darke was ordered to make a charge with a part of the second line; and the movement was executed with great spirit. The Indians at once gave way, but for want of sufficient riflemen to preserve the advantage gained,

<sup>1</sup> Major Ebenezer Denny's Diary. Published by J. B. Lipincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Testimony of Colonel Semble on the Inquiry ordered by General Washington. See Smith's Letters in the St. Clair Papers.

<sup>3</sup> The quotations which follow, unless otherwise indicated, are from Major Denny's Diary.

the enemy soon renewed their attacks, and the Americans in turn were forced to give way." The wounded were taken to the centre, where it was thought safe, and where a great many demoralized men had sought shelter. Repeated charges by the Americans were attended with great success, but upon each occasion there were heavy losses of men and officers. Of the second regiment, Major Butler, who had shown great gallantry, was dangerously wounded, and every other regimental officer fell except three. Indeed it seemed as if the officers had been singled out by the enemy, so great was the slaughter among them. General Butler and some of his most experienced subordinates were among the number. The men were left with few officers, "became fearful, despaired of success, gave up the fight, and to save themselves for the moment, abandoned entirely their duty and ground, and crowded in toward the centre of the field, and no exertions could put them in any order even for Defence." The American artillery was at length captured by the enemy, "though not until the Officers were all killed but one, and he badly wounded, and the Men almost all cut off, and not until the pieces were spiked. As our lines were



deserted the Indians contracted theirs until their shot centred from all points, and now meeting with little opposition, took more deliberate aim and did more execution." As the artillery had been silenced, and as the troops were now exposed to destructive cross fire, a retreat became absolutely necessary. It was hoped that the Indians might momentarily be diverted by the spoils of the camp, and might not press their advantage. The fight had been going on for three hours, when orders were given to make a feint upon the right flank of the enemy. By this means the force was enabled to gain the road. "A few officers put themselves in front, the men followed, the Enemy gave way, and perhaps not being aware of the design, we were for a few minutes left undisturbed." The militia led the way, followed by the United States troops. The rear was covered by Major Clark with his battalion. The camp was, of course, abandoned, and as the horses had been killed, the artillery was left upon the field. As they retreated, the men threw away their arms and accoutrements, even after the enemy had given up the chase. The road was covered with discarded equipment. At the moment of the Retreat, one of the few horses was given



to the General, who until then was on foot. Major Denny says: "I kept by him, and he delayed, to see the rear. The enemy soon discovered the movement, and pursued, though not more than four or five miles, and but few so far, they turned to share the spoil. Soon after the firing ceased I was directed to endeavour to gain the front, and if possible, to cause a short halt that the rear might get up." Howe, speaking of this retreat, says: "All the horses of the General were killed and he was mounted on a broken-down pack-horse that could scarcely be forced out of a walk. It was therefore impossible for him to get forward in person, to command a halt, till regularity could be restored, and the orders which he dispatched by others for that purpose were wholly unattended to. The rout continued to Fort Jefferson, where they arrived after dark, twenty-seven miles from the battle-ground. The retreat began at half-past nine in the morning, and as the battle commenced half an hour before sunrise, it must have lasted three hours, during which time, with only one exception, the troops behaved with great bravery. This fact accounts for the immense slaughter which took place."<sup>1</sup> Major Denny

<sup>1</sup> Howe, "Historical Collections," Vol. II, p. 485 f.

was on horseback from the first alarm, and was well mounted. Hoping to restore order, he pushed forward, but met with so many difficulties and interruptions that he was two hours trying to reach the front. The journey to Fort Jefferson was made slowly and painfully. "With the assistance of two or three officers," continues Major Denny, "I caused a short halt, but the men grew impatient and would move on. I got Lieutenant Sedam and Morgan, with half a dozen stout men, to fill up the road and to move slowly. I halted myself until the General came up. By this time the remains of the army had got somewhat compact, but in the most miserable and defenceless state. The wounded who came off left their arms in the field, and one half of the others threw theirs away on their retreat. The road for miles was covered with firelocks, cartridge boxes and regimentals. How fortunate that the pursuit was discontinued! A single Indian might have followed with safety upon either flank. Such a panic had seized the men, that I believe it would not have been possible to have brought any of them to engage again."

Ferguson was probably killed in one of the fierce fights when the enemy tried to take

possession of the artillery. The fieldpieces which he brought into action were captured and recaptured three times, and were not abandoned until every artillery officer but one had been killed, and that one desperately wounded. In his official letter General St. Clair says: "The loss which the public has sustained by the fate of so many officers, particularly General Butler and Major Ferguson, cannot be too much regretted, but it is a circumstance that will alleviate the misfortune in some measure, that all of these fell most gallantly doing their duty."

The only fault which the General found with his army was its want of discipline, but this was owing to the short time that they had been in service. The officers in many cases were killed while attempting to restore order in the demoralized ranks. The United States forces were greatly outnumbered by the Indians, and the General was himself suffering from disease and fatigue.

On the afternoon of the same day that the fight occurred, Lieutenant Kersey with a detachment of the First Regiment met the rest of the army. They heard the sound of the firing when thirty miles from the scene of the battle, and soon learned from some of the

militia that the army had been defeated. Major Hamtranck, the commanding officer, thought it best that the regiment should retire to Fort Jefferson, "to secure at all events that post." Here they were found by the fugitives from the battle. General St. Clair seems to have thought it fortunate that the First Regiment was not present during the engagement. The result would probably have been the same, but the loss of life in the United States army would have been greater.

The battle was celebrated in verse by an artilleryman in Major Ferguson's command :

We charged again with courage firm  
But soon again gave ground ;  
The war-hoop redoubled  
As did the foes around ;  
They killed Major Ferguson,  
Which caused his men to cry :  
" Our only safety is in flight  
Or fighting here to die."

A few weeks after the battle, search was made for the lost cannon, but without success. In 1830, a brass fieldpiece was found buried which doubtless belonged to Major Ferguson's battery. For this was the spot from which the Indians were three times driven at the point of the bayonet to the high ground in the rear ;

and it was probably at this spot that Ferguson met his death while gallantly serving his guns. Some years after the battle, Ferguson's watch, silver cup and pocket Bible were found in the possession of a British officer of Detroit, who had received them from an Indian. When applied to by the family for the return of these mementoes, the officer surrendered the cup and Bible, but it is reported that he said he had use for the watch. The Bible and cup are in possession of the writer.

Beyond his military record but little is known of Major Ferguson's life. His entire energy seems to have been given to his profession. But on January 21, 1791, he was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society, at the same time with Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, and Edmund Randolph, Attorney-General of the United States. Two years previous to this, he had presented to the Society "a collection of curious petrifications and other fossils found in different parts of the western countries." Benjamin Franklin presided at the meeting when the presentation was made.

Colonel Winthrop Sergeant in his diary pays the following tribute to Ferguson's character: "Major Ferguson (whose department

though in all services the most arduous and attended with many perils as any in the army, does not afford a very ample field for the brilliant display of military merit) was a most cool, determined, indefatigable and gallant man, and united all those requisites which are so seldom to be met with, but which are an absolute essential in the artillery officer who aspires to the head of that scientific profession."

Major Ferguson left but one child, a daughter who became the wife of President Matthew Brown of Jefferson College, Pa. They in turn had but one daughter, Susan Mary, who married the late Henry M. Alexander of New York. Through this marriage there are numerous descendants of William Ferguson.

## APPENDIX A

Resolution passed by Committee of Safety, 9th January, 1776 : “ *Resolved*, That Capt. Proctor immediately go to Fort Island, and take under his Command the Artillery Company station'd there.”

(Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 452.)

---

Resolution passed by Committee of Safety, 25th Jan'y, 1776 : “ The Committee of Safety having resolved to increase the Number of Men in the pay of, and for the defence of this Province, Captain Proctor is hereby directed to enlist seventy Volunteers, who are to be instructed principally in the use and management of Artillery, but to be embodied in such manner, and employed occasionally upon such service as may hereafter be determined by the said Committee.”

(Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 467.)

---

From the Minutes of the Council of Safety, under date of 26th Jan'y, 1776 :

“ The following is the form of an Enlistment to be signed by the Voluntiers to be enlisted by Capt. Proctor, Vizt.:

“ We whose names are hereunto subscribed, do voluntarily agree to enter into the Service of the Province of Pennsylvania, to be instructed in the use and management of Artillery, Com-manded by such officers as now are or may be hereafter ap-pointed by the Assembly of this Province, or Committee of Safety, and to be occasionally employed in such Military Duty and Service in this or the Adjacent Provinces, or the River Delaware, as the defence of this Province may hereafter re-



quire, and for which they shall receive the orders of either of the above Boards."

(Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 468.)

---

Resolutions passed by the Committee of Safety, 24th Febr'y, 1776 :

"*Resolved*, That Capt. Proctor make use of Seven Rooms in the Pest House, on Province Island, for quartering part of the Artillery Company.

"That there be Six 18 pound Gun Carriages made for the use of the Battery at Fort Island, and that Mr. Nevil be employed in making one of the said Carriages, and furnish this Board with an account of the same.

"That Captain Proctor have the use of as many Firelocks as he may have occasion for, and a 6 pound Cannon to exercise the Men under his Command, and that Robert Towers be directed to deliver the same.

"That Commodore Caldwell & Capt. Proctor fix upon proper Signals for the Fleet, Merchantmen & Battery, and that the same be communicated to the Pilots employed in Navigating Vessels through the Chevaux de Frize.

"That Capt. Proctor procure a Flagg Staff for the Fort, with a Flagg of the United Colonies.

"That Robert Towers put up 50 Rounds of Cartridge, with different kinds of Shot, for each of the six 18 pound cannon on the Battery at Fort Island.

"That Mr. Owen Biddle & Capt. Whyte order a Smith's Shop and Forge to be erected on Fort Island, and to furnish the same with proper Smith's tools.

"That the said Committee see that the necessaries wanting at Fort Island for the use of the Battery, and for Capt. Proctor's Company, not mention'd in the above Resolves, be supplied.

"*Resolved*, That Jeremiah Simmons, now a Lieut. on board one of the armed Boats be appointed 1st Lieutenant in Capt. Proctor's Company of Artillery."

(Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 494.)



Extract from the Minutes of the Committee of Safety, under date of Monday, 6th May, 1777 :

“Orders were this day sent to the Commanding officer of the Fleet & Artillery Company at Fort Island, to call every Boat & Soldiers to their stations, & each to prepare for immediate action, and to suffer no Officer or Man to leave their station without the License of this Board, or the Commanding officer.”

“*Resolved*, That Colo. Nixon & Capt. Whyte be desired immediately to go to Fort Island, and give every necessary advice to assist the Officers carrying the above orders into execution.

“The Officers & Men of the Armed Boats now in Town, except Capt. Boy’s, were this day directed to go immediately to their stations at Fort Island.”

(Minutes of the Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 557.)

---

Resolution passed by the Committee of Safety, under date of 7th May, 1776 :

“*Resolved*, That the following recommendation be made public at the Coffee House of this City :

“In Committee of Safety, May 7, 1776.

“There being a very pressing necessity for a large Quantity of Lead for the public use, in the Defence now formed for the security of the Liberties of this Country, it is most earnestly recommended to all the Inhabitants of the City and Liberties of Philadelphia, to send in to Robert Towers, Commissary for this purpose, all such Lead as they may have in use in their Families and about their Houses, such as draught weights, window weights & Clock Weights, and it is hoped that this requisition will be cheerfully complied with, when every individual considers that he thereby does Essential service to his Country, and that Iron weights may be procured to supply his private convenience. The Liberal Price of six pence per pound will be allowed.”

(Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 558.)

Resolution passed by the Council of Safety, October 5, 1776 :  
“ *Resolved*, That the two Companies of Artillery, under the Command of Major Thomas Proctor, be officered with One Captain & three Lieutenants for the present ; & that the following Gentlemen be and are hereby appointed officers in said Companies, vizt. :

*First Company.*

John Martin Strohboch, Captain.  
Worsley Emes, First Lieutenant.  
Charles Turnbull, Second Lieutenant.  
William Ferguson, Third Lieutenant.

*Second Company.*

Thomas Forrest, Captain.  
Hercules Courtney, First Lieutenant.  
Francis Proctor, Second Lieutenant.  
Patrick Duffy, Third Lieutenant.

(Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 742.)

---

Resolution passed by the Council of Safety, October 5, 1776 :

“ *Resolved*, That a Detachment be made from the Artillery Companies of the State, of fifty men, to be sent to Fort Montgomery, under the command of Captain Strohboch, Subject to the direction of the Commander-in-Chief, and that two of the Commissioned Officers in his Company, and Lieutenant Proctor, of Captain Forrest’s Comp’y, proceed with the said Detachment (that they may have an opportunity of seeing Service), to be relieved at such time as the board may think proper, and that they shall march as soon as they are furnished with necessary Camp Equipage. Major Proctor is to see this resolve carried into Execution.”

(Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, p. 743.)

## APPENDIX B

COL. J. HARMAR TO PRES. DICKINSON, 1785.

FORT MCINTOSH, MAY 24TH, 1785.

*Sir,*

I was honored last evening with your letter of the 26th ult'o, inclosing me the late resolution of Congress respecting a new arrangement of the Corps.

Inclosed be pleased to receive a list of the Officers who are willing to continue upon the present establishment. If two Captains only are to be appointed, I would beg leave to recommend seniority.

Lieut. Herbert has been suspended in his command the chief part of the time the Corps was raised, and in my opinion is unworthy of command.

The reduction of the Pay of the Officers appears to be rather parsimonious. What the views of Congress may be, in abridging the pay, the Officers know not. If his Excellency the President & the Honorable Council should think proper to continue me, I am willing to remain upon the present arrangement.

Pay & Subsistence (any further than to support the rank & Dignity of an Officer) I despise.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient & very h'ble Serv't,

JOS. HARMAR, Lt. Col. Com.

Directed,

To the Honorable John Armstrong, Esqr., Secretary to Council, Philadelphia.

Hon'd Lt. DOYLE.

Names and Rank of the Officers of the Pennsylvania Line who are at present in the service of the United States and are willing to remain upon the Establishment agreeable to the Act of Congress of the 7th of April, 1785.

Names.	Rank.	Dates of appointment
Josiah Harmar,	Lieutenant Colonel,	12th August, 1784.
Walter Finney,	Captain,	12th August, 1784.
David Zeigler,	Captain,	12th August, 1784.
William McCurdy,	Captain,	12th August, 1784.
Thomas Douglass,	Captain,	12th August, 1784.
Joseph Ashton,	Lieutenant,	12th August, 1784.
Stewart Herbert,	Lieutenant,	12th August, 1784.
Erkurius Beatty,	Lieutenant,	12th August, 1784.
Thomas Doyle,	Lieutenant,	12th August, 1784.
John Armstrong,	Ensign,	12th August, 1784.
Ebenezer Denny,	Ensign,	12th August, 1784.
Nathaniel McDowell,	Ensign,	21st October, 1784.
John McDowell,	Surgeon,	12th August, 1784.
Richard Allison,	Mate,	12th August, 1784.

JOS. HARMAR, L't Col. Com't.

FORT MCINTOSH, May 24th, 1785.

## APPENDIX C

In the Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, Vol. XIV, Colonial Records, p. 569, there appears the following under date of October 20, 1785 :

“Council met this day and proceeded to the appointment of a Captain of Artillery and Ensign of Infantry to complete the number of officers required of this State in forming the Federal Militia Regiment commanded by Colonel Josiah Harmar when

“Ferguson, Esquire, was appointed Captain of Artillery and Edward Speare, Esquire, Ensign, of Infantry.”

This action was reported to the Secretary of War by the following communication :

SECRETARY ARMSTRONG TO SECRETARY OF WAR, 1785.

*Sir,*

I have the honor to inform you that from the Resolutions of Council of the 8th of September & 20th of October, 1785, it

appears that the following gentlemen were appointed to command the quota of Troops, required from this State in forming the Regiment of Federal Militia, agreeably to an Ordinance of Congress & a Law of this Commonwealth.

Viz. Josiah Harmar, Esq., Lt. Col. Commd't.  
Walter Finney, Captain.  
David Zeigler, "  
Wm. McCurdy, "  
Ercurius Beatty, Lieutenant of Infantry.  
Thomas Doyle, " " "  
John Armstrong, " " "  
Nathaniel McDowell, Ensign.  
Ebenezer Denny, "  
Edward Spear, "  
Ferguson, Captain of Artillery.  
Joseph Ashton, Lieutenant " "  
John McDowell, Surgeon.  
Richard Allison, Surgeon's Mate.  
I am Sir, with much respect,  
Your most Obedient Humble servt.,  
JOHN ARMSTRONG, JR., Sec'y.

Philadelphia, Secretary's Office, 20th October, 1785.

Directed,

The Honorable Major General Knox, Secretary of War.

COMPANIES.	OFFICERS.										Total, including non-com-missioned and privates.
	Field. Lieut. Colonel	Command.			Staff.		Non-Com'd.			Privates.	
		Captains.	Lieutenants.	Ensigns.	Surgeon.	Mate.	Sergeants.	Corporals.	Music.		
At Fort Harmar.....	I	I	I	I	I	..	3	4	2	53	62
{ Capt. Zeigler's.....											
{ Capt. McCurdy's ..	..	I	I	I	..	..	3	4	2	42	51
At the Rapids of the Ohio, { return dated 28 Oct. }	..	..	I	I	..	I	4	2	2	51	59
At Venango, McIntosh, and Post Vincennes, { return dated 1st Oct. }	..	I	I	..	..	..	3	3	2	42	50
Total.....	I	3	4	3	I	I	I3	I3	8	188	222
Wanting to complete Establishment.....	..	I	..	..	..	..	2	2	..	34	38
	I	4	4	3	I	I	I5	I5	8	222	260

Fort Harmar, at the mouth of the Muskingen, December 23d, 1787.

Attest, E. DENNY, Ens'n. and Adj't.

JOS. HARMAR, Lt. Col. Com.

N. B.—Forty of Capt. Ferguson's Company are at Post Vincennes.

## APPENDIX D

LT. COL. JOSIAH HARMAR TO V. P. MUHLENBERG, 1788.

FORT HARMAR, June 30, 1788.

*Sir,*

I had the honor to address Council on the 24th April, from Fort Pitt upon the subject of the Treasurer of Pennsylvania's three drafts on the County Treasurer of Westmoreland, Washington & Fayette, for monies for the recruiting service, & to inform your honorable body that there was a likelihood of obtaining nothing but the paper currency for them, & at the same time praying that some other arrangements might speedily be made in order to obtain specie, as paper would not answer the purpose.

Since which I have to acknowledge the receipt of two Letters from the hon'ble, the Vice President in Council, the one dated the 18th April, the other the 16th May last. The former enclosed our State Commissions. The latter, I observe, desires that the final determination on the rank of Ensigns Denny & Spear may remain suspended until I have an opportunity to lay the several pretentions before the Board.

Respecting the dispute of rank between these Gentlemen, a Board of officers was convened a twelvemonth ago, in order to determine it, I did not chuse to give my opinion at that time concerning it, but referred the proceedings to the Secretary of War, who was pleased to decide in favor of Ensign Spear; upon this principle, that Ensign Denny could not by virtue of his one year's service (which was considered as militia Rank, from the Act of Congress of the 3d June, 1784) take rank of Ensign Spear, whose rank was derived from Continental service. In consequence of this decision of the Secretary of War, orders have long since been issued by me at this post, announcing Ensign Spear as the Senior officer.

I have been informed that Captain Zeigler is contesting rank with Capt. Ferguson. The same principle which de-

cides the rank of Ensign Denny & Ensign Spear, I presume should operate in the case of Capt. Ferguson & Capt. Ziegler. The Query is whether the one year's service was Militia or Continental rank? If Council should be of opinion that the one year's service was Militia rank, Capt. Ferguson is undoubtedly Senior to Capt. Ziegler.

As the right of finally judging upon this case rests with your hono'ble Body, I beg leave to offer the following observations.

Captain Ferguson is now absent at Post Vincennes, and perhaps has not in council one friend to advocate his cause. He is an officer of distinguished & superior abilities in the Artillery department. The consequence will be that if Captain Ziegler obtain Rank of him he will instantly resign, which will be a loss not only to the State of Pennsylvania, but to the States in General. I question very much whether an officer of equal abilities of his grade & in his line, can be furnished by any State in the Union.

Doctor John McDowell has resigned his commission on the 1st instant. The surgeon's mate, Richard Allison, is fully qualified, I believe, to succeed him.

There will be a vacancy now for a Surgeon's mate from our State. Doctor Scott, the surgeon's mate of the Jersey quota, begs me to recommend a friend of his, Mr. John F. Carmichael (a native of Pennsylvania). I have no knowledge of the young Gentleman, but from Dr. Scott's representation, I beg leave to recommend him to fill the vacancy, provided the hon'ble Council thinks it proper, and has no other person in view.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

With the highest Esteem & respect,

Your most h'ble & obt. Serv't, Jos Harmar,

Lt. Col. 1st U. S. Reg.

Directed,

The honorable P. Muhlenberg, Esq., Vice President in Council, Pennsylvania.

(Pennsylvania Archives, Old Series, Vol. XI, p. 325.)

And at page 391 the following letter from Peter Muhlen-



berg, Vice President of the Council, which seems to be the last recorded transaction covering the matter.

V. P. MUHLENBERG TO BRIG. GEN. JOSIAH HARMAR, 1788.

In Council,

Phila., Wednesday, September 9th, 1788.

Dear General,

Your favor of the 30th of June has been for a considerable time under consideration of the Board, but owing to the embarrassment The Executive labor under by the depreciation of the paper Curr'y, we found that to comply with your request, relative to the Money allotted for the recruiting service, it was absolutely necessary we should lay the matter before the House. This has been done & the result I shall do myself the Honor to communicate as soon as the House determine.

Agreeably to your recommendation, The Board have appointed R. Allison Surgeon to your Reg't & J. F. Carmichael, Mate. The Board seem still to adhere to their former determination relative to the dispute of Rank between Ziegler, Ferguson &c., as they do not consider the Troops rais'd by virtue of the resolution of Congress of the 3d of June, 1784, as Militia.

The hurry of business occasioned by the meeting of the House &c., prevents me from saying more on the subject at present. I shall do myself the Honor to write you fully in a few days.

I have the honor to be

with great Respect, your most

obedient and very humble Servant,

Peter Muhlenberg,

V. President.<sup>1</sup>

Honorable Brigadier General Harmar.

Extract from Henry Howe's "Historical Collections of Ohio," 1852, which is taken from Burnet Notes.

*Page 130.* The loss sustained by the country from the fall of so many gallant Officers & Men was most seriously regretted, General Butler and Major Ferguson were spoken of with pecul-

<sup>1</sup>(Pennsylvania Archives, Old Series, Vol. XI, pp. 325-391.)

iar interest. The public feeling was, however, in some measure alleviated by the fact that these brave Men, Officers and Privates fell covered with honour in defending the cause of their country.

---

## APPENDIX E

List of the Killed and Wounded Officers in the Army of the United States, commanded by General Arthur St. Clair, November 4, 1791.

### ARTILLERY

*Killed.*

Major Ferguson.  
Captain Bradford.  
Lieutenant Spear.

*Wounded.*

Captain Ford.

### CAVALRY

*Wounded.*

Captain Trueman.  
Captain Debutst.  
Cornet Bhines.

### FIRST REGIMENT

*Wounded.*

Captain Doyle.

### SECOND REGIMENT

*Killed.*

Major Heart.  
Captain Phelon.  
Captain Newman.  
Captain Kirkwood.  
Lieutenant Warren.  
Ensign Balsh.  
Ensign Cobb.

*Wounded.*

Lieutenant Graton.

## FIRST REGIMENT OF LEVIES

### *Killed.*

Captain Vanswearinger.  
Captain Tibton.  
Captain Price.  
Lieutenant McMath.  
Lieutenant Boyd.  
Ensigns Wilson.  
    Reaves.  
    Brooks.  
    Chase.  
    Turner.  
Adjutant Burgess.  
Dr. Grayson.

### *Wounded.*

Lieutenant Colonel Dark.  
Captain Dark.  
Captain Buchanan.  
Lieutenant Morgan.  
Lieutenant Lyle.  
Lieutenant Rhea.  
Lieutenant Davidson.  
Lieutenant Price.  
Adjutant Whistler.

## SECOND REGIMENT OF LEVIES

Captain Cribbs.  
Captain Pratt.  
Captain Smith.  
Captain Purdy.  
Lieutenant Kelso.  
Lieutenant Lukins.  
Ensigns McMickle.  
    Beatty.  
    Purdy.  
Adjutant Anderson.

Lieutenant Colonel Gibson.  
Major Butler.  
Captain Slough.  
Lieutenant Thompson.  
Lieutenant Cummins.  
Lieutenant Read.  
Ensign Moorhead.  
Adjutant Crawford.

## KENTUCKY MILITIA

Lieutenant Colonel Oldham.	Captain Thomas.
Captain Lemmon.	Captain Maddison.
Lieutenant Briggs.	Lieutenant Owens.
Ensign Montgomery.	Lieutenant Stagnet.
	Ensign Walter.
	Dr. Gano.

## APPENDIX F

Letter of President Washington announcing to Congress the defeat of Gen. St. Clair, in which engagement Major Ferguson was killed :

“UNITED STATES, DEC. 12, 1791.

*Gentlemen of the Senate and of the House of Representatives,*

It is with great concern that I communicate to you the information received from Major General St. Clair, of the misfortune that has befallen our troops under his command.

Although the national loss is considerable, according to the scale of the event, yet it may be repaired without great difficulty, excepting the brave men who have fallen on the occasion, and who are a subject of public as well as private regret.

A further communication will shortly be made of all such matters as shall be necessary to enable the Legislature to judge of the future measures which it may be proper to pursue.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

## APPENDIX G

Inventory of the Personal Estate of the late Major William Ferguson, dec'd., taken the seventeenth day of March, *Anno Domini* one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two,

by EDWARD LYNCH,

PETER BENSON.

*In the Kitchen.*

1	Tin plate Stove .....	£6. 10.
2	old chairs .....	3.
1	Pine Table .....	3. 9
1	pair of Andirons, Shovell & Tongs.....	1.
1	Oval bake oven & Hooks.....	15.
2	Iron potts & Kettle.....	12. 6
1	Copper Tea Kettle .....	10.
1	Gridiron & Bake plate .....	6. 8
1	Dripping Pan & Frying pan.....	8. 4
2	Funnels & 1 Toaster.....	
2	Tin Cullinders .....	

*In the Kitchen.*—Continued.

1	Tin lamp.....		
3	do cups.....		
6	do Pattepan.....	£	9.
1	Drudge box .....		
1	Iron Pepper box.....		
1	do Sauce pan .....		
2	Pewter Dishes .....		9.
2	Iron & brass candlesticks.....		8. 4
1	pair Flat Irons & Stand.....		7.
<hr/>			
	Carried forward.....	£12. 2.	7
<hr/>			
	Brought forward.....	£12. 2.	7
1	Spicer Mill .....		5.
6	Skewers & 1 Flesh-fork .....		9
	Crane Hooks & Chain .....		1. 6
1	Cleaver .....		1. 6
4	Oyster knives.....		
4	Table Do. ....		
6	Forks & 1 Carving knife & fork.....		
8	Plates (Queens Ware).....		
9	Desert Do. Do. ....		
5	Soup Do. Do. ....		
1	Pitcher Do. Do. ....		
1	Do. (Earthen).....		13. 9
8	Jars .....		
6	Earthen Potts.....		
3	Do. basins & pipkin.....		
2	Queens Ware Bowls .....		
2	pair Snuffers & Tray.....		1.
3	pewter Spoons .....		6
1	Bucket & 2 pot Hooks.....		2. 6
2	Queens Ware butter boats & Mug.....		1.
<hr/>			
	Carried forward.....	£13. 15.	1
<hr/>			
	Brought forward.....	£13. 15.	1
1	Iron ladle, Strainer & Rowling pin.....		2.
1	Wash bench & Ironing board .....		5. 6
1	Knife board .....		1.

*In the Cellar.*

1 Safe .....	£	15.
4 Cedar Tubs .....		10.
1 Brass Kettle.....	2.	
1 half barrel & brass Cock.....		4.
1 Market basket.....		2.

*In the Parlour.*

8 Cane Chairs (stuffed bottoms).....	4.	10.
1 Dining Table (Mahogany).....	3.	
1 Breakfast “ “ .....	1.	15.
1 Looking Glass.....	5.	12. 6
1 Sett China (not compleat) & Tray....	3.	
1 Small Waiter .....	12.	6
1 Rittenhouse Stove.....	3.	
1 pair brass Andirons .....	2.	5.
1 pair Tongs & Shovel.....	10.	
1 Hearth brush .....	1.	
1 Carpet .....	2.	
3 Small baskets.....	1.	16
1 Castor with Silver Top.....	2.	10.
1 pair plaited Salts.....	1.	5.
1 China punch bowl.....	7.	
3 large & 4 small Queens Ware dishes ...	12.	6
1 Delft bowl .....	1.	10
1 Doz. black bottles & Cork Screw.....	4.	
6 Blue & White Cups & Saucers (China) .	7.	6
1 pair brown Tea pots “ .	2.	
1 Sugar bowl & Cream Cup “ .	5.	
Carried forward.....	£19.	16. 11

Brought forward.....	£19.	16. 11
6 breakfast bowls & Saucers.....	3.	9
3 Tea Canisters (Tin).....	2.	
1 Sugar box “ .....	1.	10
4 Decanters .....	9.	
5 Wine Glasses .....	3.	9
3 Tumblers .....	1.	
2 Small Servers.....	1.	3

*In the Parlour.—Continued.*

12 Tea Spoons & Sugar Tongs .....	£4. 2. 6
4 Table Spoons.....	4.
1 Cloathe Brush & 1 Furniture Do.....	2.
Books on different subjects.....	4.
1 Map of the Western Country .....	2. 6
1 pair of gift Candlesticks.....	15.
1 pair Window blinds .....	4.

*In the front Chamber.*

1 High post bedstead & Sacking bottom..	3. 15.
1 Suit bed Curtains (Do.) & 3 Window Curtains with cornices & pins.....	18. 15.
1 Small pine Table.....	3. 9
1 Small Looking Glass .....	2. 5.
4 Cane Chairs .....	1. 10.
1 Pair Small Andirons.....	14.
1 Case with 12 bottles .....	15.

*In the middle Chamber.*

1 low post bedstead .....	7. 6
1 Chair .....	3. 9

*In the Kitchen Chamber.*

1 Mahogany Bureau.....	4.
1 Field bedstead & Sacking bottom.....	1. 10.
3 Rush bottom chairs .....	12. 6

Carried forward ..... £98. 17.

Brought forward..... £98. 17.

1 Travelling Trunk containing 3 Dimity Jackets, 3 pair Breeches & 3 pair Stockings .....	1. 6. 6
3 Feather beds with bouldsters & pillows (weight 100 lbs.).....	13. 15.
3 Blankets .....	1. 17. 6
3 Coverlets.....	3.
3 Bed quilts.....	1. 17. 6

*In the Kitchen Chamber.*—Continued.

6½ pair Sheets, 4 pair fine & 3 coarse pillow-cases .....	£ 15.
1 Chintz Bed Spread .....	1. 15.
4 Damask Table cloths .....	3.
2 Diaper " .....	7. 6
6 fine & 6 coarse Towells .....	11. 3
6 lb. Flax .....	7. 6
16 half shares National Bank Stock .....	1200.

In the hands of Mr. Robert Patterson :

Drs. Cts.

378.22 in Six P'Cents .....	£141.16. 8
600 " " .....	225.
1,006.72 in Cash .....	377.10. 5
In Mrs. Ferguson's hands .....	52.15.
1 Brass Kettle .....	2.

£2,132.11.10

EDW'D LYNCH, Sworn the 11th day of April, 1792, &  
Before

ISAAC WAMPOLE, D'Reg'r.

Extracted from Probate Records in office of Register of  
Wills at Philadelphia.

## APPENDIX H

"The Council met.

PHILADELPHIA, Thursday, October 20, 1785.

Present :

The Honorable CHARLES BIDDLE, Esquire, Vice President.

HENRY HILL,	JOHN WHITEHILL, and	} Esquires.
JOHN BOYD,	JOHN NEVILLE,	
STEPHEN BALLEET,		

Council this day proceeded to the appointment of a Cap-  
tain of Artillery and Ensign of Infantry, to compleat the num-



ber of officers required of this State, in forming the Federal Militia regiment, commanded by Colonel Josiah Harmar, when

FERGUSON, Esquire, was appointed Captain of Artillery, and Edward Spear, Esquire, Ensign of Infantry."

(Extract from Minutes of Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, 14 Colonial Records, p. 559.)

---

## APPENDIX I

31627 A. G. O.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
WASHINGTON, January 21, 1896.

MR. CHARLES B. ALEXANDER,  
NO. 4 WEST 58TH STREET, NEW YORK CITY.

*Sir :*

In reply to your letter of the 12th instant, I have the honor to inform you that there is no record in this office of the early service of Major William Ferguson ; but that it appears from Heitman's Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army that he was from Pennsylvania ; that he became a Captain-Lieutenant, 4th Continental Artillery, March 14, 1777 ; was taken prisoner at Bound Brook April 13, 1777 ; exchanged December 1, 1780 ; promoted captain April 14, 1778, and retired January 1, 1783.

The official records show that he was appointed Captain United States Artillery, 20th October, 1785 ; Captain Artillery Battalion United States Army, 29th September, 1789 ; promoted Major Commandant Artillery Battalion United States Army, 4th March, 1791 ; and was killed 4th November, 1791, near Fort Recovery, Ohio, in action with Indians at St. Clair's defeat.

Very respectfully,

W. P. HALL, Assistant Adjutant General.

## APPENDIX J

PHILADELPHIA, December 20, 1898.

REV. MAITLAND ALEXANDER, D.D.

43 EAST 125TH STREET, NEW YORK.

*Dear Sir and Brother :*

In reply to yours of the 17th instant, I have caused a careful search to be made of the records in this office, and the name of William Ferguson does not appear among those who were members of the Craft in this Jurisdiction.

In the confusion of the war of the Revolution many of our early records were lost.

While the Provincial Grand Lodge granted military or travelling Warrants, there were no returns received or kept of the transactions of such Lodges. I herewith enclose Historical sketch of Lodge No. 19, by Brother George Griscom, which may prove of interest to you, and from which you will learn how difficult it is to obtain correct information relating to the matter you refer to.

Regretting my inability to furnish you the information you desire,

I remain,

Yours truly and fraternally,

WILLIAM A. SINN, Grand Secretary.

---

## APPENDIX K

### ARMY RECORD OF MAJOR WILLIAM FERGUSON

Heitman's Historical Register of the Continental Army shows that William Ferguson became a

Captain-Lieutenant, 4th Continental Artillery, March 14, 1777.

He was taken prisoner at Bound Brook, April 13, 1777.

Exchanged, December 1, 1780.

Promoted Captain, April 14, 1778.

Retired January 1, 1783.

Appointed Captain United States Artillery, October 20, 1785.  
Captain Artillery Battalion, United States Army, September  
29, 1789.  
Promoted Major Commandant Artillery Battalion, United  
States Army, March 4, 1791.  
Killed November 4, 1791. Near Fort Recovery, Ohio, in  
action with Indians at St. Clair's defeat.

---

## APPENDIX L

Extract from Smith's Letters in St. Clair's Papers of the testimony of Colonel Semble on the Inquiry ordered by President Washington.

---

Just after the tap of the drums of the morning of the 4th I heard Major Butler interrogating Adams about the success of the enterprise of Captain Slough the preceeding night. Adams replied that they had seen a number of Indians; that he, Adams, had shot at, and, he believed, killed one, and wished a party to go out with him and endeavour to find the Indian. Major Butler seemed displeased that they had taken no prisoners, about this time the firing began, an attack having been made on the Militia; I observed Major Ferguson preparing to fire his cannon on the Indians who were pursuing the flying Militia; and soon saw him fire, which put them in great confusion, but they were soon rallied by their Leader on horseback dressed in a red coat.

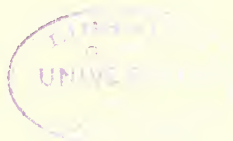
---

## APPENDIX M

Extract from Major General Arthur St. Clair's Book on his Campaign against the Indians. Note 18 in appendix; page 269.

"It was my intention to have moved as early as possible on  
"the 4th of November and by a forced march to have reached

“the Miami Town that day; and to that end all the provisions,  
“except for two days which the Men were to carry; the bag-  
“gage and knapsacks, were to have been left in a small redoubt  
“that could have been constructed in a few hours; (the plan  
“and situation of which had been settled with Major Ferguson)  
“under the guard of all those who were not fit to undertake  
“such a march.”









14 DAY USE  
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED  
**LOAN DEPT.**

RENEWALS ONLY—TEL. NO. 642-3405

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or  
on the date to which renewed.

Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

*Orange County Pub.*

INTER-LIBRARY  
LOAN

JUN 12 1969

RECEIVED

JUL 16 '69 -1 PM

LOAN DEPT.

JUN 14 1975 # 1

REC. CIR. JUN 20 '75

LD 21A-40m-2, '69  
(J6057s10)476-A-32

General Library  
University of California  
Berkeley



Alexander, C. B. .F4A3  
Major William Ferguson....

E.207

.F4A3

Alexander

172767

25m-5,'13

